

The Honorable Steve Daines
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Angus King
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jon Ossoff
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Raphael Warnock
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Natural Resources Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Buddy Carter
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 18, 2026

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the undersigned local, regional, and national conservation organizations, we write to express serious concerns regarding recent actions by the National Park Service (NPS) at Cumberland Island National Seashore and respectfully request your oversight assistance.

Although our organizations may approach Cumberland Island stewardship issues from different perspectives, we are united in advocating for transparent, science-based management consistent with the Seashore's legislative mandate that Cumberland Island be "permanently preserved in its primitive state" and with the National Park Service's obligations under the Organic Act to conserve park resources and values unimpaired for future generations. We believe that the actions described below conflict with those statutory mandates.

Specifically, we request that your offices work together to initiate a formal oversight review and seek a written response from NPS addressing the following:

- 1) Proposed land exchanges that would privatize a publicly owned national seashore for luxury residential development (15,000 square-foot homes);
- 2) A proposed visitor use management plan that would substantially increase visitation and development pressures on one of the most sensitive and biodiverse barrier islands on the Atlantic coast;
- 3) NPS's continued failure to complete a wilderness management plan or manage feral horses on the island, despite ongoing impacts to Cumberland Island's wilderness character and ecological integrity.

Cumberland Island is one of the last undeveloped barrier islands on the Atlantic coast, and decisions made today will determine whether future generations inherit the Seashore in the condition envisioned by Congress. NPS could address these interrelated challenges through a coordinated planning process, yet the Seashore has not completed a new general management plan since 1984.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that your offices urge NPS to pause advancement, funding, and implementation of the proposed land exchanges and visitor use proposals pending further public review and congressional oversight.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and look forward to working with your offices to ensure Cumberland Island remains protected for future generations.

Sincerely,

Birds Georgia

Center for Biological Diversity

Coalition to Protect America's National Parks

Defenders of Wildlife

National Parks Conservation Association

Sierra Club

Southern Environmental Law Center

Wild Cumberland

Wilderness Watch

Addendum: Oversight Inquiry Guidance

Our organizations encourage the oversight inquiry to address the following:

Land Exchanges and Transparency

- The status of all four proposed land exchanges, including the Greyfield and Lumar proposals;
- The legal property description, acreage, development restrictions, conservation easements, and any environmental, cultural, archaeological, wildlife, or habitat surveys associated with lands proposed for exchange;
- The appraisal process, including standards used and basis for valuation, demonstrating compliance with federal equal-value requirements;
- The legal authority under which NPS proposes to convey land through these exchanges and documentation supporting that authority;
- A description of how the proposed exchanges and associated residential development are consistent with Congress's mandate that Cumberland Island be preserved in its "primitive state;"
- Whether NPS will require conservation easements across the entirety of the parcels involved in the proposed land exchanges, including the Old House Road parcel, and if not, how allowing future residential development is consistent with Congress's mandate that Cumberland Island be "permanently preserved in its primitive state."
- Documentation supporting Superintendent Melissa Trenchik's March 17, 2026, statement that members of the public are "actively trespassing" when using roads and trails crossing lands proposed for exchange; and
- The total amount of federal funding allocated or spent on proposed land exchanges at Cumberland Island.

Wilderness Management

- Whether NPS has completed a Wilderness character baseline assessment, and if so, why that assessment has not been released to the public; and
- An explanation of why NPS has never completed a Wilderness Management Plan despite more than half of the island being designated as federally protected wilderness since 1982; and
- An anticipated timeline for completing a Wilderness Management Plan.

Visitor Use

- An explanation of how the proposed visitor use management plan and land exchanges will ensure preservation of Cumberland Island's Wilderness character.

Feral Horse Management

- An explanation for why Cumberland Island remains the only National Park Service unit on the East Coast without a feral horse management plan;
- Internal analyses regarding the ecological impacts of unmanaged horses on island resources and wildlife; and
- NPS's timeline for completing a feral horse management plan.